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## ART IN DRESS.

To the Ladies, by a Lady,

ESTERDAY we stood looking at a flower-bed, into which some really exquisite roses, besides pansies, mignonette, English daisies, verbenas, and other blossoms had been transplanted. Kate, our Iris a cook, and a beautiful girl, by the way, was hanging out the Monday's washing to dry, over a plat of rich, new grass, green and velvety, and delightful to the eyes and feet. She sympathized with our admiration of the grass, and the delicate, soul-enchanting roses; "but this," said she, "is the prettiest flower of them all, I think," and she pointed out a sprig of the scarlet bloom of the fish-geranium. It was *gayest*, and therefore handsomest to her—she required not the yearning holiness of the lily, nor the grace and love-inspiring perfumes of the roses and pansies. We would not give one half-expanded rosebud with the blush diffusing itself outward from its odorous heart, for a basket-full of fish-geraniums. But which of us was right? Often, when we have been thinking upon Dress, as a subject for study, to be cultivated as a *Fine Art*, we have gone to nature, who is the mother of art, for lessons. We have seen that she mingled all colors with effects which are truly harmonious; and why should we be more arbitrary than she in her adornment of the flowers, when we would prescribe the hues and combinations for a lady's toilet? The "puritan pansy" puts on a yellow vest with its purple velvet robe; the queenly tulips are gorgeous with streaks of red and yellow, gay enough for an Indian squaw; the florist labors for rainbow effects in his pet dahlias; the poppy flaunts her scarlet looped petticoat, and the peony shakes out her dozen of crimson *jupes*; the morning-glory trims her blue robe with a scarf of pink; while one and all, without exception, find a mantle of green becoming. Nature tries all kinds of experiments with the materials at her command, and her success is always certain. If nothing in nature is ugly, then is nothing in art ugly when it simply copies nature; and it cannot truly be said (though it is often asserted) that good taste limits the colors of the toilet, and that drab, or black, or white, slightly relieved by some trimming in

harmony, not in contrast, is the only really elegant costume. If a dahlia can look well in purple, black and yellow, then why not a lady? If a maiden fastens the flounces of her azure ball-dress with pink garlands, she is only copying the pattern of the morning-glories—and would she ask to be more modest and tasteful than they?

Still, there seems to be such a thing as the correspondence of attire with complexion, height, style and years. The fragile lily of the valley does not depend from a mullen-stock, nor is the superb japonica nestled amid the moss and grass with the violet. Therefore ladies may well and profoundly study, which of all the various patterns and hues best assimilate with the character of each; and *therefore* it is, that we enter our protest against the blind adoption of any and every color and shape which fashion may dictate. Upon the brow of fashion is written, change; she is a chameleon—yet there is no woman (almost none) but will pronounce her beautiful, whatever aspect she assumes; and the number is precisely equal who will pronounce her thrown-off aspect as hideous and ludicrous. The women who adored her elegance in large bonnets, coat-sleeves, and slender skirts, now turn from the memory with uplifted hands. The name of fashion is Caprice, and of her followers is Folly. It is well that nature knows her own mind better; else, some seasons we should have all the flowers of the garden, regardless of what was intended for them, dressed up in the queenly bell-shaped robe and snowy trail of the calla; again we should have the holly-hocks and peonies all squeezed into dainty lady-slippers; and anon, the violets and primroses smothered in the mantle of the dahlias.

Let word come over from Paris that green is to be worn by Mistress Fashion, and straightway every sallow-faced woman becomes "sicklied o'er with the pale cast" of jaundice. Or let the mandate be blue, and no face is so florid but that it can afford a deeper tint for the sake of being in the fashion. No woman is too short for plaids or too tall for stripes—when they are fashionable; nor too thick for short waists nor too thin for long ones.

It is impossible to arrive at any fixed standard of taste in dress; for it is a curious fact that, what our eyes have become accustomed to, *that* we regard as becoming. Most new fashions displease when first seen, and become more charm-

ing as we grow familiar with them—we regret to change, yet after the change is made, it grows more beautiful than the last. Studying the art of dress is like gazing into a whirlpool of bubbling waters—the longer it is continued the more confused we grow. We would only suggest, that while fashion is not neglected entirely, propriety, becomingness, style, and place, be also respected.

In Miss Muloch's "Thoughts about Woman," she has a chapter upon growing old, in which the art of growing old in dress at the same time as in person, is touched upon, with several other pleasantly discussed points. We quote the chapter, as somewhat apropos to what we have been saying, and because of its interest to our sex:

Growing old. A time we talk of, and jest or moralize over, but find almost impossible to realize—at least to ourselves. In others, we can see its approach clearer; yet even then we are slow to recognize it. "What, Miss So-and-so looking old—did you say? Impossible: she is quite a young person; only a year older than I—and that would make her just—Bless me! I am forgetting how time goes on. Yes"—with a faint deprecation which truth forbids you to contradict, and politeness to notice—"I suppose we are neither of us so young as we used to be."

Without doubt, it is a trying crisis in a woman's life—a single woman's particularly—when she begins to suspect she is "not so young as she used to be;" that after crying "Wolf" ever since the respectable maturity of seventeen—as some young ladies are fond of doing, to the extreme amusement of their friends—the grim wolf, old age, is actually showing his teeth in the distance; and no courteous blindness on the part of these said friends, no alarmed indifference on her own, can neutralize the fact that he is, if still far off, in sight. And, however charmingly poetical he may appear to sweet fourteen-and-a-half, writing melancholy verses about "I wish I were again a child," or merry three-and-twenty, who preserves in silver paper, "my first gray hair," old age, viewed as a near approaching reality, is—quite another thing.

To feel that you have had your fair half, at least, of the ordinary term of years allotted to mortals; that you have no right to expect to be any handsomer, or stronger, or happier than you are now; that you have climbed to the summit of life, whence

the next step must necessarily be decadence; ay, though you do not feel it—though the air may be as fresh, and the view as grand—still, you know that it is so. Slower or faster, you are going down hill. To those who go "hand-in-hand,"

"And sleep thegither at the foot,"

it may be a safer and sweeter descent; but I am writing for those who have to make the descent alone.

It is not a pleasant descent at the beginning. When you find at parties that you are not asked to dance as much as formerly, and your partners are chiefly stout, middle-aged gentlemen, and slim lads, who blush terribly, and require a great deal of drawing out; when you are "dear"-ed and patronized by stylish young chits, who were in their cradles when you were a grown woman; or when some boy, who was your plaything in petticoats, has the impertinence to look over your head, bearded and grand, or even to consult you on his love affairs. When you find your acquaintance delicately abstaining from the term "old maid," in your presence, or immediately qualifying it by an eager panegyric on the solitary sisterhood. When servants address you as "Ma'am" instead of "Miss;" and if you are at all stout and comfortable-looking, strange shop-keepers persist in making out your bills to "Mrs. Blank," and pressing upon your notice toys and perambulators.

Rather trying, too, when, in speaking of yourself as a "girl"—which, from long habit, you unwittingly do—you detect a covert smile on the face of your interlocutor; or, led by chance excitement to deport yourself in an ultra-youthful manner, some instinct warns you that you are making yourself ridiculous. Or, catching in some strange looking-glass the face that you are too familiar with to notice much ordinarily, you suddenly become aware that it is *not* a young face; that it will never be a young face again; that it will gradually alter and alter, until the known face of your girlhood, plain or pretty, loved or disliked, admired or despised, will have altogether vanished—nay, is vanished: look as you will, you cannot see it any more.

There is no denying the fact—and it ought to silence many an ill-natured remark upon "mutton dressed lamb-fashion," "young ladies of a certain age," and the like—that with most people the passing from maturity to middle age is so gradual,

as to be almost imperceptible to the individual concerned. It is very difficult for a woman to recognize that she is growing old; and to many—nay, to all, more or less—this recognition cannot but be fraught with considerable pain. Even the most frivolous are somewhat to be pitied, when not conducting themselves as *passée*, because they really do not think it, they expose themselves to all manner of misconstructions by still determinedly grasping that fair sceptre of youth, which they never suspect is now the merest "rag of sovereignty"—sovereignty deposed.

Nor can the most sensible woman fairly put aside her youth, all it has enjoyed, or lost, or missed—its hopes and interests, omissions and commissions, doings and sufferings—satisfied that it is henceforth to be considered entirely as a thing gone by—without a momentary spasm of the heart. Young people forget this as completely as they forget that they themselves may one day experience the same, or they would not be so ready to laugh at even the most foolish of those foolish old virgins, who deems herself juvenile long after everybody else has ceased to share in the pleasing delusion, and thereby makes both useless and ridiculous that season of early autumn which ought to be the most peaceful, abundant, safe, and sacred time in a woman's whole existence. They would not, with the proverbial harsh judgment of youth, scorn so cruelly those poor little absurdities, of which the unlucky person who indulges therein is probably quite unaware—merely dresses as she has always done, and carries on the harmless coquettices and *minauderries* of her teens; unconscious how exceedingly ludicrous they appear in a lady of—say forty! Yet in this sort of exhibition, which society too often sees and enjoys, any honest heart cannot but often feel, that of all the actors engaged in it, the one who plays the least objectionable and disgraceful part is she who only makes a fool of *herself*.

Yet why should she do it? Why cling so desperately to the youth that will not stay, and which, after all, is not such a very precious or even a happy thing? Why give herself such a world of trouble to deny or conceal her exact age, when half her acquaintance must either know it or guess it, or be supremely indifferent about it? Why appear dressed—undressed, cynics would say—after the pattern of her niece, the belle of the ball; annoying the eye with beauty either half withered,

or long overblown, and which in its prime would have been all the lovelier for more concealment?

In this matter of dress, a word or two. There are two styles of costume which ladies past their *premiere jeunesse* are most prone to fall into; one hardly knows which is the worst. Perhaps, though, it is the ultra-juvenile—such as the insane juxtaposition of a yellow skin and white tarlatine, or the anomalous adorning of gray hair with artificial flowers. It may be questioned whether at any age beyond twenty a ball costume is really becoming; but after thirty, it is the very last sort of attire that a lady can assume with impunity. It is said that you can only make yourself look younger by dressing a little older than you really are; and truly I have seen many a woman look withered and old in the customary evening-dress which, being unmarried, she thinks necessary to shiver in, who would have appeared fair as a sunshiny October day, if she would only have done nature the justice to assume, in her autumn-time, an autumnal livery. If she would only have the sense to believe that gray hair was meant to soften wrinkles and brighten faded cheeks, giving the same effect for which our youthful grandmothers wore powder; that flimsy light-colored gowns, frittered over with trimmings, only suit airy figures and active motions; that a sober-tinted substantial gown and a pretty cap, will any day take away ten years from a lady's appearance. Above all, if she would observe this one grand rule of the toilet, always advisable, but after youth indispensable—that though good personal "points" are by no means a warrant for undue exhibition thereof, no point that is positively unbeautiful ought ever, by any pretence of fashion or custom, to be shown.

The other sort of dress, which, it must be owned, is less frequent, is the dowdy style. People say—though not very soon—"Oh, I am not a young woman now; it does not signify what I wear." Whether they quite believe it, is another question; but they say it—and act upon it when laziness or indifference prompts. Foolish women! they forget that if we have reason at any time more than another to mind our "looks," it is when our looks are departing from us. Youth can do almost anything in the toilet—middle age cannot; yet is none the less bound to present to her friends and society the most pleasing exterior she can. Easy is it to do this

when we have those about us who love us, and take notice of what we wear, and in whose eyes we would like to appear gracious and lovely to the last, so far as nature allows; not easy when things are otherwise. This, perhaps, is the reason why we see so many unmarried women grow careless and "old-fashioned" in their dress—"What does it signify?—nobody cares."

I think a woman ought to care a little for herself—a very little. Without preaching up vanity, or undue waste of time over that most thankless duty of adorning one's self for nobody's pleasure in particular—is it not still a right and becoming feeling to have some respect for that personality which, as well as our soul, heaven gave us to make the best of? And is it not our duty—considering the great number of uncomely people that are in the world—to lessen it by each of us making herself as little uncomely as she can?

Because a lady ceases to dress youthfully, she has no excuse for dressing untidily; and though, having found out that one general style suits both her person, her taste and convenience, she keeps to it, and generally prefers moulding the fashion to herself, rather than herself to the fashion, still, that is no reason why she should shock the risible nerves of one generation by showing up to them the out-of-date costume of another. Neatness invariably; hues carefully harmonized, and, as time advances, subsiding into a general unity of tone, softening and darkening in color, until black, white and gray alone remain, as the suitable garb for old age; these things are every woman's bounden duty to observe as long as she lives. No poverty, grief, sickness, or loneliness—those mental causes which act so strongly upon the external life—can justify any one (to use a phrase probably soon to be obsolete when charity and common sense have left the rising generation—no fifth of November) in voluntarily "making a Guy of herself."

That slow, fine, and yet perceptible change of mien and behavior, natural and proper to advancing years, is scarcely reducible to rule at all. It is but the outward reflection of an inward process of the mind. We only discover its full effect by the absence of it, noticeable in a person "who has such very young manners, who falls into rapture of enthusiasm, and expresses loudly every emotion of her na-

ture." Such a character, when real, is unobjectionable, nay, charming, in extreme youth; but the great improbability of its being real, makes it rather ludicrous, if not disagreeable, in mature age; then the passions die out, or are quieted down, the sense of happiness itself is calm, and the fullest, tenderest tide of which the loving heart is capable, may be described by those "still waters" which "run deep."

To "grow old gracefully"—as one, who truly has exemplified her theory, has written and expressed it—is a good and beautiful thing; to grow old worthily, a better. And the first effort to that end, is not only to recognize, but to become personally reconciled to the fact of youth's departure; to see, or, if not seeing, to have faith in, the wisdom of that which we call change, yet which is in truth progression; to follow openly and fearlessly, in ourselves and our own life, the same law which makes spring pass into summer, summer into autumn, autumn into winter, preserving an especial beauty and fitness in each of the four.

Yes, if women could only believe it, there is a wonderful beauty even in growing old. The charm of expression arising from softened temper or ripened intellect, often amply atones for the loss of form and coloring; and, consequently, to those who never could boast either of these latter, years give much more than they take away. A sensitive person often requires half a life-time to get thoroughly used to this corporeal machine, to attain a wholesome indifference both to its defects and perfections—and to learn at last, what nobody would acquire from any teacher but experience, that it is the mind alone which is of any consequence; that, with a good temper, sincerity, and a moderate stock of brains—or even the two former only—any sort of body can in time be made useful, respectable, and agreeable, as a traveling dress for the soul. Many a one, who was absolutely plain in youth, thus grows pleasant and well-looking in declining years. You will hardly ever find any body, not ugly in mind, who is repulsively ugly in person after middle life.

Some good qualities are not unfrequently created by the belief of their existence; for men are usually anxious to justify the good opinion entertained of them

### THE GOBLIN TAPESTRY.

'NEATH the eaves there sits a goblin  
In the sunshine and the rain,  
Even the soft wooing south-wind  
Whispers in his ear in vain.

When the wintry storm is raging  
And the bitter north winds blow,  
And the leaden clouds are bending  
To the earth o'ercharged with snow.

When the dying boughs are creaking  
O'er the shattered window-pane,  
And the maddened gale is whistling  
In a wild and fitful strain—

Still, beneath the eaves, the goblin  
Sits unmindful of the strife,  
Weaving with untiring fingers  
The strange warp and woof of life.

In that tapestry are mingled  
Varied scenes of light and shade,  
Woven in undying colors,  
Neither sun nor dew can fade.

Oft the warp of hope is blended  
With the woof of dark despair,  
And the cords of joy and sorrow  
Oft are twined together there.

And the secrets most we cherish,  
Which would cause the blush of shame.  
There are traced, 'mid golden pictures,  
Mingled with the wreaths of fame.

There, beneath the eaves, the goblin  
Will toil, 'till the chilly hand  
Of the spectre, Death, shall lead us  
To the unknown spirit land.

M. R.

He would recommend those who traveled, and who loved art, never to have copies made of already-copied pictures—there were numbers of the finest pictures scarcely known that had never been copied, and that might be shot-riddled next month. The reputation of many oft-copied pictures arose mainly from the fact that they were easy to be seen, not because they were the best; those to which he had referred would have to be sought. There were many portions of frescoes by Michael Angelo that had never been engraved, which were just as beautiful as those that had; there were other works by Michael Angelo and many by Perugino, his master. Artists should be got to look for neglected things; it was much better that rich picture-fanciers should do this, than that they should depend upon themselves.—Ruskin.